

Rubric for Charter School Application for the Washington State Charter School Commission

For questions, please contact:

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WSCSC STRATEGIC VISION

The Washington State Charter School Commission (The Commission) seeks to authorize high quality schools that will significantly improve student outcomes, particularly for at-risk students. The Commission will hold schools accountable for student learning using multiple measures of student achievement.

The Commission seeks to build a diverse portfolio of school delivery models that expand the authority of teachers and school leaders and encourage and accelerate the identification and use of best practices in teaching and learning. It also seeks to develop, test, and document innovative new ideas that can be replicated in other Washington schools.

The Commission expects schools to have authentic and sustainable connections to the communities they serve. These connections are evidenced by strong commitments from community and business stakeholders, systems for ensuring cultural sensitivity and responsiveness to all students and their families, and effective, engaged governance boards.

Rubric Ratings

Rating	Characteristics
Exceeds the Standard	The response surpasses all key performance expectations/goals found under meets expectations. It exhibits high overall performance in all categories and, routinely goes beyond what is expected and is fully aligned with the strategic mission of the Commission.
Meets the Standard	The response reflects a thorough understanding of key issues. It addresses the topic with specific and accurate information that shows thorough preparation; presents a clear, realistic picture of how the school expects to operate; and inspires confidence in the applicant’s capacity to carry out the plan effectively.
Partially Meets the Standard	The response meets the criteria in many respects, but lacks detail or specificity and/or requires additional information in one or more areas.
Does Not Meet the Standard	The response meets the criteria in some respects but has substantial gaps in a number of areas or the response is wholly undeveloped or significantly incomplete; demonstrates lack of preparation; or otherwise raises substantial concerns about the viability of the plan or the applicant’s ability to carry it out.

In addition to meeting the criteria specific to a section, each part of the proposal should align with the overall mission, budget, and other sections of the application.

Application Dates¹

PROPOSAL EVALUATION TIMELINE	
DATE	MILESTONE
July 15, 5pm PDT	Proposal deadline
July 25-August 25	Independent proposal evaluation
August 27 & 28	Capacity interviews
September 22	DRAFT independent Recommendation Reports released
September 29	Deadline for applicants to respond to Recommendation Reports
October 3	FINAL independent Recommendation Reports released
October 9	Commission decisions

¹ Additional deadlines and due dates are stated in the Timeline provisions of the RFP.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
<p>A strong response will meet the following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The executive summary clearly outlines the following information: the school's mission and vision; target student population and community location or geographic area for the proposed school and the school district where it will be located; the educational need and anticipated student population; leadership and governance; enrollment summary; a brief description of the plan for the school and an explanation of how the applicant will successfully open and operate a high-quality school; community engagement, evidence of need, and parent and community support for the proposed charter school.• The information is accurate, cohesive, clear, concise, compelling, and measurable.• The mission statement defines the purpose of the proposed charter school and is consistent with the goals, enrollment plan, curriculum, instruction, assessment, and learning environment proposed in the application.• The target population meets the definition of “at-risk student” as defined by the Charter Schools Act.• The executive summary communicates confidence in the school’s ability to achieve its goals.• If the applicant requests an additional planning year, a clear and compelling explanation of the rationale for the additional planning year (e.g. securing start-up funding, facilities acquisition, etc.) is provided.

SECTION 1. EDUCATION PROGRAM DESIGN AND CAPACITY

CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN AND CAPACITY

A strong response will meet the following criteria:

- The curriculum and instructional design framework clearly reflect the needs of the anticipated student population and present a clear and coherent framework for teaching and learning.
- A culturally responsive description of the basic learning environment, classroom management, and structure that is research-based and/or a demonstrated best practice.
- A description of anticipated class size and how it relates to the educational program.
- The overview of the curriculum, which includes a sample course scope and sequence for one subject for each division (elementary, middle, and high school), is aligned with identified course outcomes and applicable state standards and is culturally responsive to the target population.
- The educational program or key elements are based on proven teaching methods, have a sound base in research, theory, and/or experience and have been or are likely to be rigorous, engaging, and effective for the anticipated student population.
- If the curricular content is developed, the summarized description includes a compelling and clear rationale demonstrating the appropriateness and effectiveness of the content for the anticipated student population that is aligned with the school’s mission and its goals meet or exceed federal and state standards.
- If the curricular content is not developed, the detailed plan includes a timeline for completion, staff responsible, and evidence demonstrating that the content will meet the above criteria.
- A clear description of the primary teaching methods and instructional strategies that the school will expect teachers to use. These methods should be culturally responsive, research-based and/or a demonstrated best practice. The response should describe why the strategies are well-suited for the anticipated student population.

STUDENT PERFORMANCE STANDARDS AND EXPECTATIONS

A strong response will meet the following criteria:

- A description of student performance expectations for the school as a whole is specific, measurable, realistic, and attainable.
- A detailed description of the school’s plan for using internal and external assessments to measure and report student progress.
- If the applicant plans to adopt or develop additional academic expectations beyond the state standards, a clear and compelling explanation and rationale of the expectations

(e.g. content areas, grade levels) are provided.

- Policies, standards, and expectations for promoting students from one grade to the next are based on research and/or best practices and include a plan for clear articulation to staff, students, and families.
- For high school applications: The high school graduation requirements are detailed and clearly explain and include a description of the process of earning credit hours, calculating grade point averages, information available on transcripts, and elective courses offered. Also included are clear explanations of additional requirements that exceed state standards explanations of how these requirements ensure student readiness for college or post-secondary opportunities, and an explanation of the systems and structures used for students at risk of dropping out and/or not meeting graduation requirements.

SCHOOL CALENDAR AND SCHEDULE

A strong response will meet the following criteria:

- The calendar meets or exceeds the minimum of 180 days of instruction and an annual average of one thousand hours, which shall be increased to at least one thousand eighty instructional hours for students enrolled in each of grades seven through twelve and at least one thousand instructional hours for students in each of grades one through six according beginning in the 2015-16 school year.
- A clearly articulated explanation of how the calendar meets the needs of the school's educational program.
- The structure of the school day, including number of instructional hours/minutes in a day for core subjects; the length of the school day (start/dismissal times); and the minimum number of hours/minutes devoted to instruction in each grade aligns with academic goals and is developmentally appropriate for the student population.

SCHOOL CULTURE

A strong response will meet the following criteria:

- A description of the culture of the proposed school that is inclusive and supports high expectations and the fulfillment of educational goals.
- An explanation of how the school will promote a positive academic environment and reinforce student intellectual and social development. The explanation is culturally

- responsive and research-based and/or reflective of best practice.
- An effective plan for establishing and maintaining the culture among students, teachers, administrators, and parents.
- An explanation of how the school culture will support and be responsive to all students, including students with diverse special needs.

SUPPLEMENTAL PROGRAMING

If offered, a strong response will meet the following criteria:

- A comprehensive description of proposed after-school and summer school offerings including the schedule, length, and anticipated participants.
- A clear plan for outreach to families to apprise them of supplemental programming opportunities.
- A clear plan for resource and staffing needs is provided and reflected in the budget.
- A clearly articulated description of extra-curricular or co-curricular activities offerings and how they will be delivered and funded.
- A clearly articulated description of programs that address student mental, emotional, and social development and health, including how the program will be funded and how those programs will meet the unique needs of the student population.
- A clearly articulated explanation of how these programs/activities integrate with the overall education plan for the schools and the individual development plans for students.

SPECIAL POPULATIONS AND AT-RISK STUDENTS

“At-risk student” means a student who has an academic or economic disadvantage that requires assistance or special services in order to succeed in educational programs. The term includes, but is not limited to, students who do not meet minimum standards of academic proficiency, students who are at risk of dropping out of high school, students in chronically low-performing schools, students with higher than average disciplinary sanctions, students with lower participation rates in advanced or gifted programs, students who are limited in English proficiency, students who are members of economically disadvantaged families, and students who are identified as having special educational needs.

In addition to a particular area of focus it is important to meet the needs of all students. A strong response will meet the following criteria:

- A description of the overall plan - including staffing and budget requirements - to identify and successfully serve at-risk students, as defined in the above. The plan must adhere to the federal and state laws regarding services and must support students with, or at risk of being identified as having, a disability. Specific plans for how the school

will meet the needs of at-risk students’ learning needs in the least restrictive environment, as defined by state and federal special education guidelines and law; how the school will meet the needs of students who do not meet minimum standards of academic proficiency, students who are at risk of dropping out of high school, and students coming from chronically low-performing schools.

- Specific plans to identify and serve highly capable students.
- A clearly articulated explanation of how the plans for all identified student groups comply with applicable laws and regulations governing services to these student populations.
- A description of any specific target student populations and the plans to serve them.

A CULTURALLY INCLUSIVE STUDENT RECRUITMENT AND ENROLLMENT PLAN

A strong response will meet the following criteria:

- An overview of the culturally inclusive student marketing and recruitment plan and enrollment policy that will provide equal access to all interested students and families.
- Specific plans for recruiting and enrolling at-risk students, as defined in the Charter Schools Law.
- A realistic timeline for implementation of the plan including identification of necessary staff and resources.
- The enrollment plan must comply with all federal and state laws.
- Specific details about the lottery procedures the school will use if interest exceeds capacity.

DISCIPLINE POLICY AND PLAN

A strong response will meet the following criteria:

- Provide a detailed description of the proposed discipline plan.
- A detailed explanation of how the plan is based on some combination of research, theory, experience, and best practices.
- The plan must address how it will be effective for the anticipated student population.
- Demonstrate and explain how the discipline policy will be culturally responsive.

- Demonstrate compliance with applicable state laws and authorizer policies with references to those laws and policies. Policies must adhere to legal due process requirements and must clearly articulate:
 - How equitable and fair practices with incentives will be used to promote positive behavior and school climate;
 - The type of conduct the policy will encompass and penalties for violations of the policy;
 - The rights of students with disabilities in disciplinary actions and proceedings;
 - The due process that will be provided when a student is suspended or expelled; and
 - An explanation of how this policy will be communicated to students and parents.

CONVERSION SCHOOLS

If applicable, a strong response will meet the following criteria:

- A detailed plan for how they intend to engage the school community and any information regarding steps already taken. The plan should be both proactive in engaging students and families and comprehensive and inclusive in engaging the school community.
- The plan must demonstrate that the conversion school will have sufficient capacity to enroll all students who wish to remain enrolled in the school after the conversion.
- Include a petition signed by a majority of teachers assigned to the school or a petition signed by a majority of parents of students in the school.
- Include a detailed description (if applicable) of the organization's prior experience in converting an existing school or taking over or turning around an underperforming school.
- Identify specific ways it will engage and transform the existing school culture to serve the goals of the Charter Schools Law.

FAMILY & COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

A strong response will meet the following criteria:

- Demonstrate community involvement and support in development of the proposed school.
- Provide evidence to support the belief that there is a community need/demand for the school.
- Provide evidence of partnerships that have already been established with community organizations, businesses or other educational institutions.
- Include a detailed plan for engaging families in the school before it opens and once students are enrolled. The plan should include specifics on proposed events or activities to engage families.
- Description of how the surrounding community will be included in the school.
- Plans for tracking, monitoring, and improving family and community engagement.
- Plans for providing opportunities and communicating expectations about parent involvement.

EDUCATION PROGRAM CAPACITY

A strong response will meet the following criteria:

- If known, identify the key members of the school's leadership team who will be responsible for development and opening of the school.
- A clear and compelling description of the key members' qualifications to implement the proposed school design.
- Identify and describe the organizations, agencies, or consultants that are proposed partners in planning for, establishing, and supporting the school.
- If known, identify the school leader and his/her unique qualifications to the lead the school and to serve the targeted student population.
- If no school leader is identified, a description of the job and its qualifications, timeline, criteria, recruiting and selection process.
- A description of the responsibilities and qualifications of the school's leadership/management team beyond the principal/head of school.
- A plan for recruiting and developing school leadership and staff.
- An explanation of who will be working full time, or nearly full time, to lead development of the school and the plan to compensate them.
- A description of the group's ties and/or knowledge of the target community.

- Provide evidence of partnerships that have already been established with community organizations, businesses or other educational institutions, with concrete identification of the current and future roles that these community organizations, businesses or other educational institutions will play in the school's development.

SECTION 2. OPERATIONS PLAN AND CAPACITY

SCHOOL GOVERNANCE

A strong response will meet the following criteria:

- The proposed governance plan and structure must, at a minimum, comply with all applicable laws and regulations.
- Articulate the board’s governance philosophy and provide evidence of its legal status and governing documents, as well as proposed bylaws.
- Provide an organizational chart that makes clear the relationship between the board, management company (if applicable), and school leadership. Organizational charts should be presented for the first year of operation and throughout term of the charter. The organizational chart must clearly present the school’s organizational structure including lines of authority and reporting between the governing board, staff, and related bodies, such as advisory bodies or parent and teacher councils.
- A description of the roles and responsibilities of the governing board, school leadership, management, staff and any related bodies, and any external management organization or any other entities.
- An explanation of the governance philosophy guiding the board.
- A description of the governance structure.
- Include a list of identified board members and their intended roles and responsibilities, including their interests in and qualification for serving the school's board. If there is no initial governing board, an explanation of how and when the transition to the formal governing board will take place; the procedure by which board members have been and will be selected, and how frequently they will meet.
- Include a description of the board's ethical standards and procedures for identifying and addressing conflicts of interests; plans for increasing the capacity of the governing board; and identify advisory bodies and describe the roles and duties of those bodies.
- Include a description of the school's grievance process if a student or parent has an objection to the governing board policy or decision, administrative procedure, or practice at the school.
- Includes completed conflict of interest and background check disclosures and associated documentation (see section: *Other Information* below).

SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS

A strong response will meet the following criteria:

School district or educational service district (if applicable):

- The proposed partnership agreement between a charter school and the school district or educational service district (ESD) in which it resides and a description of the terms of that agreement.

Educational service provider (if applicable):

- Include an explanation(s) of any other partnerships or contractual relationships central to the school's operations or mission; in the case of an application where the proposed charter school intends to contract with a nonprofit education service provider (ESP) for substantial educational services, management services, or both, the applicant must:
 - Provide evidence of the nonprofit ESP's success in serving student populations similar to the targeted population, including demonstrated academic achievement as well as successful management of nonacademic school functions if applicable;
 - Provide a term sheet setting forth the proposed duration of the service contract; roles and responsibilities of the governing board, the school staff, and the ESP; scope of services and resources to be provided by the service provider; performance evaluation measures and timelines; compensation structure, including clear identification of all fees to be paid to the service provider; methods of contract oversight and enforcement; investment disclosure; and conditions for renewal and termination of the contract; and
 - Disclose and explain any existing or potential conflicts of interest between the charter school board and proposed service provider or any affiliated business entities.
- Include evidence of proposed ESPs track record of success in serving a similar student population
- Include a plan for engagement of families and communities

SCHOOL STAFFING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

A strong response will meet the following criteria:

- Provide sound plans for staffing the school in the first year and throughout the term of the charter. The plan should include details on recruitment and hiring of staff including desired qualifications, proposed compensation, means of recruitment, timeline, and staff responsible.
- Provide a comprehensive plan and calendar for professional development and teacher support that is aligned to the mission of the school and differentiated for the needs of individual teachers.
- A description of how teaching and non-teaching staff will be managed, evaluated, and held accountable.

PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK

A strong response will meet the following criteria:

- Include a detailed description of the school's specific performance measures that address, at a minimum, the following mission-specific items:
 - Educational goals and targets;
 - Organizational goals and targets;
 - Non-mandatory assessments or measures for evaluating student learning needs and progression within the school year; and
 - Training and support school leadership and teachers will receive in analyzing, interpreting, and using performance data to improve student learning.
 - Assessments should be aligned to the state standards, reflective of the state’s accountability plan, and include plans for continuous feedback to teachers to evaluate student progress and drive decision making school-wide.
- Assessments should provide for multi-level evaluation including individual students, student cohorts, and the whole school. The plan should address how performance will be tracked over time and how data will inform goal monitoring and interventions for those students failing to meet academic goals.
- Plans for additional, non-standardized assessments should address the assessment’s validity, reliability, and rigor.
- The assessment plan should include plans for informing students and families of progress.

- Plan for professional development related to analyzing and interpreting performance data to drive instruction and decision-making.

SCHOOL FACILITIES

A strong response will meet the following criteria:

- A detailed plan for acquiring a suitable facility including budget, facilities start-up including backup or contingency plans, and a letter of intent.
- For a conversion school, the applicant must supply evidence that it has notified the encompassing school district of the conversion with the understanding that if the school is approved, an approved detailed facilities plan will be required as part of the preopening requirements..
- The facility must meet state and federal guidelines for special needs students.
- The response should highlight whether existing public or nonpublic facilities or an independent facility is proposed.
- If a building is not identified, include a clear process for identifying and securing a facility, as well as staff responsible and timeline.
- For a conversion school, the applicant must supply evidence that it has notified the encompassing school district of the conversion.

START-UP AND ONGOING OPERATIONS

A strong response will meet the following criteria:

- A plan for safety and security for students, the facility, and property.
- Provide a detailed start-up plan for the school that specifies task, timelines, and responsible individuals.
- A plan for transportation, food services, and all other significant operational or ancillary services.
- A description of types and levels of insurance coverage.
- A detailed description that provides evidence of capacity to manage start-up and operations including individual and collective qualifications for successfully implementing operations plan with specific emphasis on staffing, performance management, professional development, general operations, and facilities management; and evidence of the organization's capacity and experience in facilities acquisition and management.

SECTION 3. FINANCIAL PLAN

FINANCIAL PLAN
<p>A strong response will meet the following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A detailed financial plan that addresses, at a minimum, the following:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A detailed description of the systems, policies, and procedures the school will use for financial planning, accounting, purchasing, and payroll, including a description of internal controls and methods for ensuring compliance with all financial reporting requirements• Roles and responsibilities of administration and governing board for school finances• Plans and procedures for annual audit of financial and administrative operations• Methods for ensuring financial transparency• Liability insurance plans with ability to indemnify the school, its board, staff, and teachers against tort claims;• Completion of a budget form and financial plan workbook• A detailed description of assumptions, estimates, and bases for revenue projections, staffing levels, and costs. This description includes start-up and five-year cash flow projections and budgets with clearly stated assumptions.• A detailed description that includes evidence of individual or collective experience and expertise in financial management, fundraising and development, and accounting and internal controls. Evidence of anticipated fundraising contributions must be provided, if claimed in the application.• The proposed budget and financial plan should be consistent with other proposed plans for the school and clearly aligned to support the school’s mission.

OTHER INFORMATION
<p>In addition to the above criteria the proposal must also satisfy the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A Conflict of Interest policy that includes, but is not limited to: full disclosure of all real or apparent conflicts of interest between reviewers, decision makers, applicants, and any affiliates of these entities.

- Background checks: (a) Each identified or proposed governing board member, as well as identified or proposed school leadership and management, must complete a background check disclosure form, waiver, and certification which will include disclosure of, at a minimum, criminal background information in accordance with enumerated questions and as aligned with RCW 28A.400.303 and the statutes cited therein. This will also require specific disclosure of financial mismanagement or malfeasance. The applicant must complete and submit the form identified in the RFP for all necessary individuals with associated attachments and permissions.
- Information and research referenced in application has been tested and confirmed.
- Information contained in the application is accurate and is not misleading.
- Demonstrate knowledge of, and ability to comply with, all applicable laws governing the operation of charter schools in Washington.
- The school's proposal does not contain provisions that violate laws applicable to charter schools in Washington.
- Issues identified in Due Diligence Report have been vetted and addressed.

SECTION 4. EXISTING OPERATORS

EXISTING OPERATORS
<p><i>If applicable, a strong response for this section will have the following characteristics:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Demonstration of a track record of academic success serving a similar student population• Growth and business plans that are likely to support all schools as the network or CMO expands• No history of charter revocation• Issues identified in Due Diligence Report have been vetted and addressed